



Guide to Food Nutrition Labels

Food nutrition labels help you understand the caloric and nutritional values of what you eat. Reading food labels can help you eat a healthy diet and achieve a healthier you.

Serving Size

Serving sizes are standardized for similar foods. All of the values on a nutrition label are for the serving size indicated on the label. In this example, the serving size is 1/2 cup. If you eat twice the serving size (a full cup), you are consuming double the values shown on the label for caloric and nutritional content.

Calories

The number of calories you consume in a day add up to your daily caloric total. Your size and activity level help determine the total calories you need each day. A 138 pound active woman, for example, needs about 2,000 calories each day, while a 160 pound active woman needs about 2,300. Balance what you eat and drink with physical activity.

Total Carbohydrates

Carbohydrates are found in foods like potatoes, bread, fruits and vegetables. Carbs should be the foundation of your diet. They provide you with nutrients and energy. When you reduce the fat you eat, you can enjoy more carbohydrates.

Dietary Fiber

Eat both soluble and insoluble dietary fiber. Vegetables, fruits, whole-grain foods, beans and legumes are good sources of fiber. Dietary fiber can help reduce the risk of cancer and heart disease, leading killers in the United States.

Protein

Adults usually consume more protein than they need. Because protein from animal sources contains both fat and cholesterol, eat small portions of lean meat, fish and poultry. Choose skim or low-fat milk, yogurt and cheese instead of the full-fat versions. Consume other healthy sources of protein in place of meat, like vegetables, beans, nuts (in moderation), grains and cereals.

Cholesterol

Too much cholesterol in your diet leads to more cholesterol in your blood stream, which can result in heart disease. Limit your total daily intake of cholesterol to 300 mg.

Total Fat

Keep calories from fat to a minimum. A diet that includes too much fat can contribute to heart disease, cancer and other ailments. Pick foods with fewer than 30% of their calories derived from fat.

Saturated Fat

The worst type of dietary fat is saturated fat. Saturated fat is known to be a key factor in raising blood cholesterol, which increases your risk of heart disease. Trans fat (hydrogenated oils) is particularly bad for you. Some food producers are reducing saturated fat in their products. Check and compare food labels and select the products with lower saturated fat and no trans fat.

% Daily Values

Food labels display the percent daily values based on a diet with a caloric intake between 2,000 and 2,500. This example is for a 2,000 calorie diet. If you consume more calories, your daily values will be higher than the values on the label.

Make it a goal to consume lower percent daily values of fats, cholesterol and sodium and strive for 100% of the values for carbohydrates, fiber, vitamins and minerals.

Sodium

Sodium is salt, and too much of it can result in high blood pressure. Restrict yourself to 2,400 to 3,000 mg of sodium a day. Many processed foods contain high quantities of sodium. Choose reduced-sodium products when you can to help reduce your daily intake.

Vitamins & Minerals

Strive to take in 100% of recommended vitamins and minerals each day. Combine a variety of healthful foods to achieve a balanced, nutritional diet. Fresh whole foods are a better source of vitamins than vitamin supplements.

Nutrition Facts			
Serving Size 1/2 cup (114 g)			
Amount Per Serving		As Served	
Calories 90	Calories from Fat 30		
		% Daily Value	
Total Fat 3g			5%
Saturated Fat 0g			0%
Cholesterol 0mg			0%
Sodium 300g			13%
Total Carbohydrate 13g			4%
Dietary Fiber 3g			12%
Sugars 3g			
Protein 3g			
Vitamin A 80%		Vitamin C 60%	
Calcium 4%		Iron 4%	
Percent Daily Values are based on a 2,000 calorie diet. Your daily values may be higher or lower depending on your calorie needs:			
	Calories	2,000	2,500
Total Fat	Less than	65g	80g
Sat Fat	Less than	20g	30g
Cholesterol	Less than	300mg	300mg
Sodium	Less than	2,400mg	2,400mg
Total Carbohydrate		300g	375g
Dietary Fiber		25g	30g
Calories per gram:			
Fat	9	Carbohydrate	4
		Protein	4

Additional nutrients may be listed on some food labels.
 G = grams (about 28 g = 1 ounce)
 Mg = milligrams (1,000 mg = 1 g)